

Michael F. Easley
Governor



State of North Carolina Office of the Governor

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GOV. EASLEY DIRECTS ABC BONUSES TO BE PAID IN FULL

RALEIGH - Gov. Mike Easley today directed the State Budget Office to pay ABC bonuses to qualifying educators at the maximum amount allowed by law. Based primarily on estimates from the Department of Public Instruction, the General Assembly appropriated \$96 million to cover the cost of the bonuses, leaving a \$44 million shortfall in the program.

"The high performance of our schools in the ABC program was great news," said Easley. "Our teachers have worked hard to make significant progress and they deserve the bonus that they were promised."

The text of Easley's letter to the Office of State Budget and Management follows:

Mr. David McCoy, Director; Office of State Budget and Management

Dear David,

*I appreciate all of the hard work that you and your office has done to maintain our budget discipline during the past few years. This work has paid great dividends, as other states continue to struggle with their problems and as **USA Today** ranked North Carolina 4th in the nation in fiscal management.*

I understand that you have been dealing with questions around the ABC bonuses. I know that the General Assembly specifically only authorized bonuses "up to" \$1500, that the Department's estimate of the cost of the bonuses was off significantly, and that we do not yet know the full cost of relief and recovery from Hurricane Isabel.

But while providing a lower bonus might be technically legally permissible, it does not keep the promise to our teachers. I request that you take all necessary steps to assure the payment of the ABC bonuses at the maximum amount as soon as possible. The full amount of the bonus can be paid within the appropriation to public schools. This is the right course of action.

Our teachers have worked hard to help students improve. The payment of the full amount of the bonus will result in continued progress in the public school, as we move closer to our goal of the #1 state for education in America.

Thank you for your assistance on this matter. Please let me know about the timing of the bonus payments as soon as possible. The state must keep its commitment to the teachers in a timely manner.

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